

In the claims

Please replace claims 1-6, 9-12, 14, 25, 27, 30, 31, 33, and 34 with the claims below having the same numbers, and add new claims numbered 35-49.

1. (Once Amended) A method for configuring a product that is associated with a number of configurable features, wherein the method allows a customer to dynamically interact with a seller of the product over the Internet during the configuration, the method comprising:

- receiving into a configuration application of the seller a selected feature;
- communicating to a manufacturer the selected feature;
- receiving from the manufacturer an automated response including an availability date that corresponds to the selected feature; and
- updating an in-process bill of materials to reflect that selected feature.

2. (Once Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

- repeating the steps of receiving into a configuration application a selected feature, communicating to a manufacturer the selected feature, receiving from the manufacturer an automated response including an availability date, and updating a number of times until the configuration is complete thereby yielding a completed bill of materials.

3. (Once Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of receiving from the manufacturer an automated response including an availability date is preceded by the step of:

- communicating the selected feature to a vendor.

4. (Once Amended) The method of claim 1, the method further comprising:

- in response to the received availability date being unsatisfactory to the customer, communicating a customer specified availability date to at least one of the seller and manufacturer.

5. (Once Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the availability date received from the manufacturer is in response to a customer specified availability date communicated to at least one of the seller and manufacturer.

6. (Once Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the availability date received from the manufacturer is in response to a customer specified price communicated to at least one of the seller and manufacturer.

9. (Once Amended) The method of claim 8, the method further comprising:
in response to the received price being unsatisfactory to the customer,
communicating a customer specified price to at least one of
the seller and manufacturer.

10. (Once Amended) The method of claim 8, wherein the price received is in response to a customer specified availability date communicated to at least one of the seller and manufacturer.

11. (Once Amended) The method of claim 8, wherein the price received is in response to a customer specified price communicated to at least one of the seller and manufacturer.

12. (Once Amended) The method of claim 8, wherein a relationship between the customer and the seller has a configuration side associated with the customer, and a resource planning side associated with the seller, and that configuration side-resource planning side relationship is respectively one of a consumer-seller relationship, a seller-manufacturer relationship and a manufacturer-vendor relationship.

14. (Once Amended) A system for configuring a product that is associated with a number of configurable features, wherein the system allows a customer to interact with a supplier of the product over the Internet during the configuration, the system comprising:

- a configuration application for receiving a product feature selected by the customer, and for validating a number of constraints associated with that product feature;
- a communication module coupled to the configuration application for communicating the selected product feature to the supplier, and for communicating over the Internet an availability date of that product feature from the supplier to the configuration application; and
- a first storage area coupled to one of the configuration application and the communication module for storing an in-process bill of materials that reflects the product feature selected by the customer.

25. (Once Amended) The system of claim 14, further comprising:
a user interface coupled to the configuration application for allowing the customer to interact with the system.

27. (Once Amended) A method for configuring a product that is associated with a number of configurable features, wherein the method allows a customer to dynamically interact with a supplier of the product over the Internet during the configuration, the method comprising:

- communicating a customer selected product feature to the supplier;
- receiving from the supplier an availability date that corresponds to that selected product feature;
- in response to the availability date being unsatisfactory to the customer,
 - communicating a customer specified availability date to the supplier; and
 - receiving from the supplier an automated response including an accommodation based on the customer specified availability date.

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30. (Once Amended) A process for configuring a product that is associated with a number of configurable features, wherein the customer dynamically interacts with a seller of the product over the Internet in order to define a set of sales parameters that includes an availability date of at least one of the configurable features, the method comprising:

responsive to the customer selecting a feature of the product, receiving from a manufacturer an automated response including an availability date that corresponds to that selected feature;

responsive to the received availability date being unsatisfactory to the customer, communicating a customer specified availability date to the manufacturer;

updating an in-process bill of materials to reflect that selected feature; and

in response to the customer being satisfied with the sales parameters, submitting a completed bill of materials to the manufacturer.

31. (Once Amended) A computer program product, stored on a computer readable medium, for configuring a product that is associated with a number of configurable features, wherein in response to the computer program product being executed by a processor, the processor performs the steps of:

receiving from a supplier over the Internet an availability date that corresponds to a product feature selected by a customer;

in response to the availability date being unsatisfactory to the customer,

communicating over the Internet a customer specified availability date to the supplier; and

receiving from the supplier over the Internet an automated response including an accommodation based on the customer specified availability date.

33. (Once Amended) A computer program product, stored on a computer readable medium, for configuring a product that is associated with a number of configurable features, wherein in response to the computer program product being executed by a processor, the processor performs the steps of:

- responsive to a customer selecting a feature of the product, receiving from a manufacturer over the Internet an automated response including an availability date that corresponds to that selected feature;
- responsive to the received availability date being unsatisfactory to the customer, communicating a customer specified availability date to the manufacturer;
- updating an in-process bill of materials to reflect that selected feature; and
- in response to the customer being satisfied with a set of sales parameters including the availability date of the selected feature, submitting a completed bill of materials to the manufacturer over the Internet.

34. (Once Amended) A system for configuring a product that is associated with a number of configurable features, wherein the system allows a customer to interact with a supplier of the product over the Internet during the configuration, the system comprising:

- configuration application means for receiving a product feature selected by the customer, and for validating a number of constraints associated with that product feature;
- communication module means coupled to the configuration application means for communicating the selected product feature to the supplier, and for communicating over the Internet an availability date of that product feature from the supplier to the configuration application means; and
- storage area means coupled to one of the configuration application means and the communication module means for storing an in-process bill of materials that reflects the product feature selected by the user.

Please add the following new claims:

35. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein the availability date received from the manufacturer over the Internet is provided by a supply chain planning (SCP) system.

36. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein the availability date received from the manufacturer over the Internet is provided by an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system.

37. (New) The method of claim 30, wherein the step of communicating a customer specified availability date to the manufacturer is followed by receiving from the manufacturer an automated response including an accommodation in response to the customer specified availability date.

38. (New) A method for selling a configurable product incorporating at least one feature to be selected by a customer, the method for each selectable feature comprising:

- (a) receiving a feature selection;
- (b) updating an inventory library based upon the selection to reflect constraints imposed by the selection;
- (c) providing the selection to a supplier;
- (d) receiving information from the supplier comprising at least one of availability date and price for the selection;
- (e) where customer desires are not satisfied, providing at least one of a customer desired availability date and a customer desired price for the selection;
- (f) displaying accommodation data from the supplier corresponding to the customer desires; and
- (g) updating at least one of a manufacturing bill of materials, a pricing bill of materials, and a configuration bill of materials based on the selection.

39. (New) The method of claim 38, wherein the customer desires comprise at least one of a plurality of availability dates and a plurality of prices for the selected feature.

40. (New) The method of claim 38, wherein the step (d) of receiving information on the selection from the supplier further comprises receiving from the supplier a plurality of availability dates and a plurality of prices for the selected feature.

41. (New) The method of claim 38, wherein the pricing bill of materials is derived from the configuration bill of materials.

42. (New) The method of claim 38, wherein the pricing bill of materials is derived from the manufacturing bill of materials.

43. (New) The method of claim 38, wherein the step (g) of updating at least one of a manufacturing bill of materials, a pricing bill of materials, and a configuration bill of materials is based upon the accommodation data from the supplier.

44. (New) A system for selling a configurable product incorporating at least one feature to be selected by a customer, the system comprising:

- an inventory library coupled to a configuration engine for providing a catalog of selectable features that correspond to a particular configurable product;
- a user interface coupled to the configuration engine for displaying selectable features and for receiving customer desires;
- a supplier system coupled to the configuration engine for providing at least one of availability information and price information to at least one of the user interface, the configuration engine, and the inventory library, and for providing accommodation data to the configuration engine in automated response to customer desires communicated to the supplier system; and
- a configuration engine for validating the customer desires against constraints associated with the selectable features, for determining whether the at least one of availability information and price information meet customer desires, and for communicating specific customer desires to the supplier system.

45. (New) The system of claim 44, wherein the user interface, configuration engine, and supplier system are remotely located with respect to each other.

46. (New) The system of claim 44, wherein the configuration engine further comprises:
a configuration application,
a price communication module,
an availability communication module, and
means for creating and updating at least one of a configuration bill of materials, a manufacturing bill of materials, and a pricing bill of materials.

47. (New) A method of selling from a supplier a product that consists of at least one selectable feature to be chosen by a customer, the method comprising:
displaying to a customer a selectable feature and at least one of price and availability date of the selectable feature,
conveying to a supplier at least one of a customer desired availability date and a customer desired price; and
supplying an automated response including an accommodation from the supplier based on the at least one of a customer desired availability date and a customer desired price.

48. (New) The method of claim 47, wherein the customer is chosen from one of the set of retailer and wholesaler and manufacturer and distributor.

49. (New) The method of claim 47, wherein the supplier is chosen from one of the set of retailer and wholesaler and manufacturer and distributor and vendor.